

Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

As a citizen who seeks to be fully informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, our community, our nation, and our world, I am dismayed by the near absence of informative and unbiased television programming. More than ever, Marshall McLuhan's message rings true. Television has become a vast wasteland.

Local public affairs programming constitutes less than one half of 1% of all local programming. Unless we witness local events or obtain a trusted primary source, we have no means to gain access to the information we need to make informed decisions.

More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections. Additionally, we need to hear directly from candidates and the initiators of ballot measures, not editorials and criticisms from political pundits. Some Americans are bright enough to make decisions based on fact.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

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